

Community IPM Grants Program

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REPORT:

Community IPM Discovery Center

A Community IPM Discovery Center is being established at the Extension Learning Farm in Canton, New York. The center will contain print, electronic, and media materials, as well as a computer kiosk to explain the principles of community IPM. The Discovery Center will also include demonstration displays that demonstrate IPM principles. The center will be open to the public daily, except some weekends, and will be an integral part of the Extension facility's Agricultural Discovery Center, Ag Field Days, Harvest Festival, and Farm and Rural Life Week, each of which reaches over 1,000 individuals, both adults and students.

With Community IPM Grant support, the Center's design process began in Fall 2000 as part of the Extension Learning Farm facility assessment processes. Extension staff familiar with public access educational site design began integrating plans with other staff familiar with technology needs. Public access patterns were observed closely during a major Open House and demonstration event (Harvest Festival) in September to rate location points at the Extension Learning Farm for IPM Discovery Center. Important factors affecting access were determined prior to construction plans. Such plans would involve modifying a part of one of the Learning Farm buildings. As such plans progressed, need for further funding support was clearly identified and proposals submitted to the local agri-business industry.

Realizing the potential usefulness of the IPM Discovery Center, Kraft Foods has approved an additional grant of over \$8,000 to complement the Community IPM Grants Program support for this project. Kraft recognizes the project's initiative for experiential learning, innovation and best practices relative to the regional dairy industry, since part of the project's application will be aimed at dairy/agriculture producers. Such support will be vital to the project's construction during Winter 2000-2001.

Also, the technology industry involving interactive computer kiosk facilities is continuing to expand, simultaneously offering improved technical options for the project's design. Recent, new ideas from computer companies alone will provide

improvements over original kiosk plans, while other supportive materials such as printed guides are also being updated. Design plans are incorporating such new developments as much as possible.

Progress is underway with identifying, recruiting local expertise for the project's most technical aspects. Primary department links are established with Clarkson University, Potsdam, and St. Lawrence University, Canton, to garner skilled assistance with computer kiosk development tailored for the project. Plans are to explore local college off-campus Service Learning Programs for ways student teams could help develop and test this project's computer applications before the general public and agricultural use by next season.

This project anticipates meeting the following objectives upon final construction for use in the 2001 growing season and beyond:

1. Youth and adult North Country residents will access centralized IPM educational websites via a computer kiosk located in an IPM Discovery Center at the Extension Learning Farm.
2. Youth and adult North Country residents will learn basic IPM principles and values through media and display items at an IPM Discovery Center located at the Extension Learning Farm.
3. Educators and IPM specialists will have information concerning the number of contacts with their web sites via the kiosk.
4. Agriculture producers will have access to up-to-date IPM best management practices through the kiosk.
5. North Country resident knowledge of IPM principles will be significantly increased.

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